UNITED NATIONS

HRI

International Human Rights Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/CORE/1/Add.45
27 July 1994

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

CORE DOCUMENT FORMING PART OF THE REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

NIGER

[27 April 1994]

I. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. Niger is a landlocked Sahelian country bordered by the Sahara.

2. Nine ethnic groups make up the population of Niger, which is mostly Muslim. They are the Arabs, Gurma, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, Songhai, Tuareg, Tubu and Djerma. The last census in 1988 estimated the population at 7,250,000, 50.4 per cent of whom are women. The population's main characteristics are that it is very young (49 per cent aged under 15; 56 per cent under 20) and the annual growth rate is very high (3.4 per cent). The school enrolment rate is 27.4 per cent and only 6 per cent for girls. The adult literacy rate is 12.52 per cent (18 per cent for men and 7 per cent for women).

3. The population is very unevenly distributed throughout the national territory. The average density is 5.7 inhabitants, but it is as high as 27 inhabitants/km^2 in the south. The majority of the population is rural, with 80 per cent, as against 15 per cent in towns. Life expectancy at birth is 47.7 years.

4. The primary sector (agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries) is the basis of Niger's economy. It employs about 85 per cent of the population and accounted for 61.2 per cent of the formation of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1981 and 45.8 per cent in 1986. The uranium subsector accounts for about 8 per cent of GDP.

5. As at 31 August 1993, external debt servicing amounted to 48.95 million for 35.599 billion in domestic debt.

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

6. Niger has had several political regimes which have not been able to create the necessary conditions for the political, economic, social and cultural development of the people.

7. The Sovereign National Conference of 29 July 1991 laid the foundations for the democratization of the political life of the country as characterized by a multi-party system. The Constitution of the Third Republic was adopted on 26 December 1992. Legislative and presidential elections were held on 14 and 27 February 1993 and 27 March 1993.

8. The current Government has proclaimed its attachment to the Constitution of the Third Republic and, in particular, to respect for democratic rules; the republican form of government; national unity and pan-Africanism; the protection of freedoms and human rights; peace and security; and social justice and solidarity.

III. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

9. The judiciary is independent of the legislature and the executive. Judicial power is exercised by the Supreme Court, the courts and the tribunals.

10. Justice in the national territory is administered on behalf of the people and with full respect for the rule of law and the rights and freedom of all citizens.

11. Judges are subject in the exercise of their functions only to the authority of the law. The President of the Republic is the guarantor of the independence of judges. He is assisted by the Supreme Judicial Council.

12. Niger, which gained independence in 1960, became a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1946 and to the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, adopted by the World Summit for Children on 30 September 1990.

13. Niger also inherited colonial legislation providing for the improvement of the status of children, such as a 1928 decree which is still in force and established special courts and a system of supervision for minors in the territories administered by the Ministry of French Overseas Territories.

14. Other texts establishing machinery for the protection of minors have been adopted. The main one is the Penal Code and its chapters on minors and the punishment of crimes and offences against children and the family, followed by the ordinances on civil status and nationality and some provisions of the Labour Code.

15. Several national human rights bodies have been established in the context of freedom of association as recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution. They include Democracy, Freedom and Development (DLD) and the Human Rights Association (ANDDH).

IV. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

16. Following the Sovereign National Conference of representatives of all key sectors of the nation who met from 29 July to 3 November 1991, work was done to provide the public and the authorities with better information on the rights embodied in the various human rights instruments, which were disseminated on radio (French and national languages) and television and in newspapers, plays and songs.

17. In Niger, the freedom and independence of the audiovisual media and the press are guaranteed by the Supreme Communications Council, an administrative authority independent of political power. It monitors respect for media ethics and fair access of political parties, associations and citizens to the official information and communications media.